

Chapter 2 Framework Element





Framework Element

Overview ²⁰⁰

THE FRAMEWORK ELEMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SERVES FOUR PURPOSES. ^{200.1}

First, it provides the context for the rest of the Plan by describing the forces driving change in the city. These forces include demographic shifts, economic change, technological change, fiscal challenges, tensions between federal and local interests, and more. Such “driving forces” define the major issues facing Washington and touch every aspect of life in the city. ^{200.2}

Second, the Element includes a description of the District’s growth forecasts and projections. The forecasts are expressed in narrative format and are also summarized in tables and charts. They show how and where the District expects to add households, people, and jobs between 2005 and 2025. ^{200.3}

Third, the Framework Element ties the Comprehensive Plan to “Vision for Growing an Inclusive City.” It lays out 36 principles to be followed as the District moves from “Vision to Reality.” These principles, largely drawn from the Vision and from the previous Comprehensive Plan, express cross-cutting goals for the District’s future that guide the Plan’s policies and actions. ^{200.4}

Finally, the Element describes the Comprehensive Plan Policy Map and the Future Land Use Map. The Policy Map “tells the story” of how the District is expected to change during the next two decades. It highlights the places where much of the city’s future growth and change is expected to occur and sets the stage for the Elements that follow. The Future Land Use Map shows the general character and distribution of recommended and planned uses across the city. Both maps carry the same legal weight as the text of the Comprehensive Plan. ^{200.5}

Unlike the other Citywide Elements, this Element does not contain policies and actions. Its intent is to provide the foundation for the rest of the Comprehensive Plan. ^{200.6}

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The Forces Driving Change ²⁰¹

The sections below describe the forces driving change in the District of Columbia and outline the implications of these forces for the District's future. ^{201.1}

The District and the Region ²⁰²

Between 1980 and 2005, the Washington metropolitan area grew by almost 50 percent, increasing from 3.4 million to 5.0 million residents. More than 1.2 million jobs were added during this period, an increase of almost 70 percent. This type of growth might not be surprising in a sunbelt city like Houston or Los Angeles, but in the urban northeast, the statistics are truly impressive. Greater Washington is the fastest growing large metropolitan area in the country outside of the South and West. This growth has been accompanied by unprecedented urban sprawl—the region has actually become less dense as it has added people and jobs. Metropolitan Washington now sprawls across 4,000 square miles of the Middle Atlantic States. ^{202.1}

Growth has changed the District's role within the region. In 1950, the District had 46 percent of the region's population and 83 percent of its jobs. By 2000, it had just 12 percent of the region's population and 25 percent of its jobs. Given the city's finite land area, this trend is expected to continue. Even the most ambitious projections show the District with a diminishing share of the region's population and jobs in the future. ^{202.2}

A declining share of population and jobs does not necessarily suggest a less important role, however. Our position as the nation's capital, our historic and unique neighborhoods, and our cultural and urban amenities will keep the city vital. In fact, these attributes have already placed a premium on Washington as it has become more distinct from the vast and relatively new suburbs growing up around it. ^{202.3}

There are warning signs that regional growth may be out of balance, however. The "inner ring" suburbs of Montgomery, Prince George's, and Fairfax Counties are planning to add 620,000 jobs during the next 25 years but only 273,000 households. Similar imbalances appear in Arlington, Alexandria, and even in counties on the suburban fringe. If the region continues to grow this way, more workers will seek housing outside the region, creating more congestion, more sprawl, and more expensive housing in the region's core. The jobs-housing imbalance may fuel demand for housing in the District as suburban residents seek to reduce their commuting times by moving closer to their jobs. However, the opposite may occur if jobs move further away and the workforce follows. ^{202.4}

Demographic Changes ²⁰³

One of the most well documented trends to affect the District over the last five decades is the loss of population. In 1950, Washington had 802,000 residents and was the 9th largest city in America. By 2000, Washington's population had dropped to 572,000 and it ranked 21st in size among U.S. cities. Between 1970 and 2000 alone, the number of people living in the District of Columbia dropped by almost 25 percent. ^{203.1}

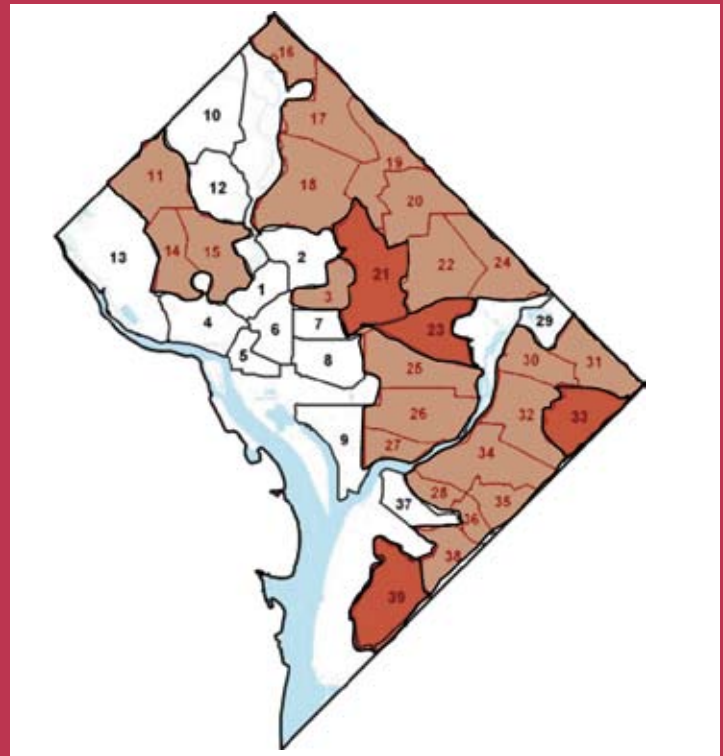
Population decline has affected different parts of the city in different ways. Figure 2.1 shows the population changes that occurred from 1980 to 2000 by neighborhood cluster. The vast majority of the decline has occurred in areas east of 16th Street. In fact, the area east of the Anacostia River lost 44,000 residents during the 1980s and 90s, while many areas west of Rock Creek Park actually gained residents. As middle-income households moved away, poorer residents were left behind, leaving the District with the largest concentration of poverty in the region and a sharper divide between rich and poor. This also resulted in a growing concentration of people with special needs, and patterns of disinvestment and social ills in many communities. ^{203.2}

Unlike the experience of other major cities, the loss of population in Washington was not the result of "white flight." In fact, between 1980 and 2000, African-Americans registered the largest decrease among the city's racial groups, dropping in population by almost 100,000. This drop was partially offset by increases in the city's Hispanic and Asian populations. ^{203.4}

While population loss after 1950 was significant, the decline in the number of households has been much less dramatic. The number of households in the District declined by just 2 percent between 1980 and 2000, standing at 248,000 in 2000. Thus, population loss in the late 1900s was less a function of housing being abandoned and more a result of larger households being replaced by

Figure 2.1:

Population Change by Neighborhood Cluster, 1980-2000 ^{203.3}



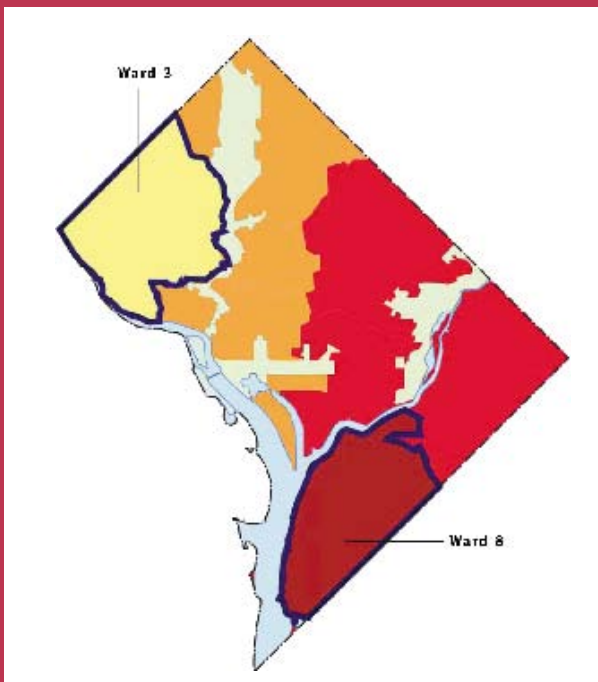
- Clusters that lost population, 1980-2000
- Clusters that lost >15% of their population, 1980-2000

Source: OP, 2002

smaller households. In fact, the average household in Washington contained 2.16 persons in 2000, down from 2.72 in 1970. Middle-class families left the city in large numbers during this period and the number of school-aged children dropped dramatically. 203.5

Looking forward, the city expects household size to continue falling through 2010, and then stabilize. According to the US Census, the percentage of seniors is expected to increase as “baby-boomers” retire, and the percentage of foreign-born residents, particularly those of Hispanic origin, is expected to rise. The District is expected to continue to be a magnet for the region’s young professionals and empty nesters. Its ability to attract families with children rests largely on its ability to improve the quality of public education and address basic issues like crime, service provision, and housing affordability. 203.6

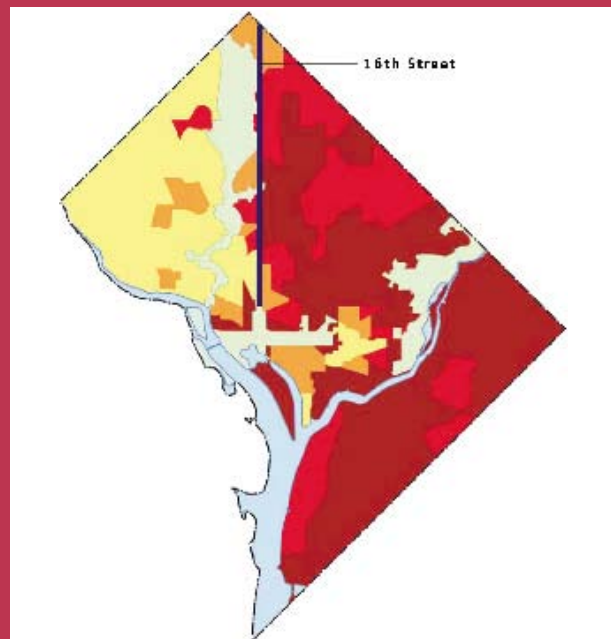
Figure 2.2:
Unemployment in 2002 204.4



- Less than 3%
- 3%-7%
- 7%-12%
- Greater than 12%

Source: DOES, 2002

Figure 2.3:
Persons 25+ Without College Degrees in 2000 204.5



- Less than 25%
- 25%-50%
- 50%-75%
- Greater than 75%

Source: 2000 Census

Economic Changes ²⁰⁴

On the surface, Washington’s economic picture would appear to be the envy of most cities. There are more jobs than residents, and nearly three times more jobs than households. In 2005, there were some 740,000 jobs in the District, an increase of about 30,000 jobs since 2000. Wages in the region are among the highest in the nation. ^{204.1}

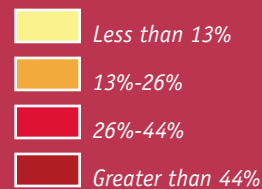
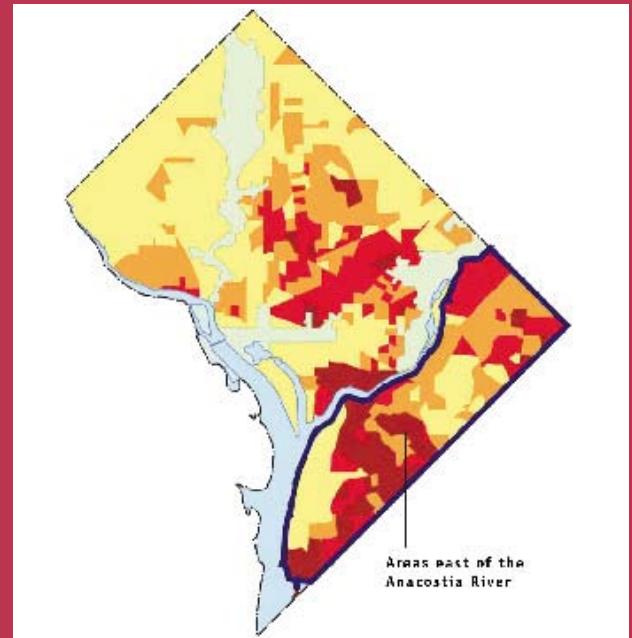
With these statistics, one might assume that every District resident who is able to work is gainfully employed. Yet the city’s unemployment rate hovers between 6 and 9 percent and is consistently double the rate for the region as a whole. Many District residents do not have the skills to fill the white-collar jobs that drive the city’s economy. More than 70 percent of the jobs in the District are filled by workers who live in Maryland and Virginia. In fact, some “importing” of workers from the suburbs is essential to the District economy—even if every DC resident in the labor force were employed in the city, we would still need over 400,000 additional workers to fill the city’s jobs. ^{204.2}

This imbalance causes a number of problems. The most often cited problem is the District’s inability to tax the incomes of the 500,000 non-residents who commute to the city each day. This daily migration is also accompanied by traffic congestion, air quality problems, and millions of hours of lost productivity. But perhaps the more profound problem is the regional income divide. As Figures 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 indicate, the District today is a city divided by income, education, and employment. “Vision for Growing an Inclusive City” concluded that bridging the income divide was the single biggest challenge facing the District as it planned for its future. ^{204.3}

From a regional perspective, the District’s employment outlook is positive. Because Washington is the seat of the federal government, it has been insulated from the economic cycles that have affected other regions of the country. The city never had a large industrial base, so it was spared the large-scale job losses experienced by places like Baltimore and Philadelphia during the 1970s and 1980s. It was not dependent on technology jobs, so it was spared the downturns affecting places

Figure 2.4:

Poverty Rate in 2000 ^{204.6}



Source: 2000 Census

Figures 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 and other demographic tables in this document are generally based on 2000 Census data. It should be noted that students residing in the District on April 1, 2000 (census day) are counted as residents of the District rather than residents of their home state. Consequently, data on poverty, age, and other variables may be skewed in census tracts containing (or adjacent to) universities. The District has accounted for these anomalies within the Comprehensive Plan, and should tailor its anti-poverty, economic development, and similar programs accordingly. ^{204.7}

like San Jose and Austin during the early 2000s. Even the downsizing of the federal government in the 1990s was accompanied by a rise in procurement spending that kept the Washington economy strong. ^{204.8}

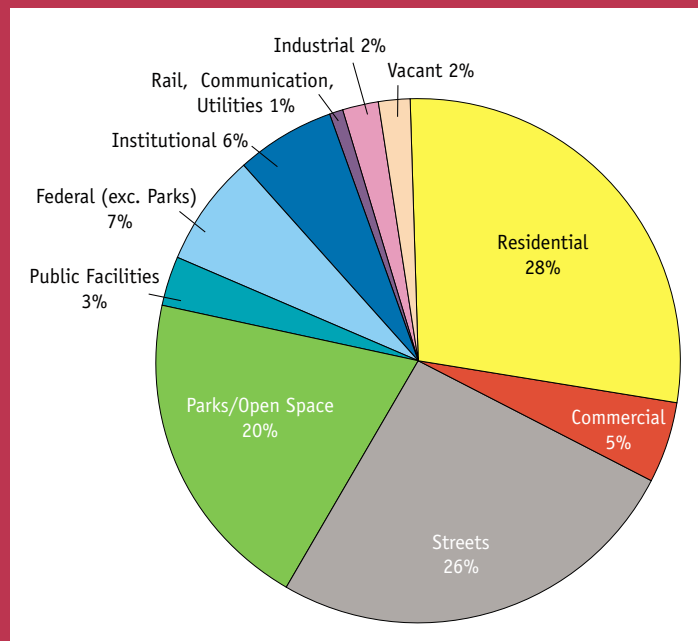
But a resilient economy alone does not close the “skills gap” that exists between the needs of local employers and the abilities of many District residents. Future job growth is expected to be concentrated in the services sector, including the business, legal, engineering, management, educational and social service fields. The Economic Development Element of this Plan emphasizes the importance of closing the skills gap by improving education and job training so that more District residents can fill jobs in these professions. ^{204.9}

Land Use Changes ²⁰⁵

In terms of land area, Washington is not a large city. At 69 square miles, it is half the size of Denver or Philadelphia, and one-fifth the size of Dallas or San Diego. It is hemmed in by adjacent cities and states and cannot grow through annexation. The District is also the sixth densest city in America, with over 9,000 people per square mile. Population density is even higher when federal lands—which comprise almost 40 percent of the District of Columbia—are subtracted out. Land is a precious and limited resource here. ^{205.1}

Figure 2.5:

Land Use Distribution, 2005 ^{205.3}



Source: OP, 2006

Figure 2.5 shows how land in the District is currently used. About 28 percent of the city is developed with housing, and more than one quarter is developed with street rights-of-way. About 20 percent of the city’s land area consists of permanent open space, including Rock Creek Park and the National Mall. About 600 acres of the city—or 1.5 percent of its land area—consists of vacant land. ^{205.2}

These statistics alone do not tell the full story of land use in the District. Since 1899, building height has been strictly regulated, giving the District a low visual profile and preventing the construction of buildings over about 14 stories tall. In addition, much of the city consists of historic districts with limited capacity for growth. Even many of the areas that are not “officially” historic are fully developed and have little potential for change. ^{205.4}

Despite these limitations, there is room for growth in the District of Columbia. Key opportunities include government lands, underused commercial and industrial sites, and vacant buildings. Other sites, including failed housing projects and ailing business districts, also present opportunities. There are also hundreds of small “infill” sites scattered throughout the city, especially in the northeast and southeast quadrants. Together, these areas hold the potential for thousands of new units of housing and millions of square feet of office and retail space. ^{205.5}

Fitting such development into the fabric of a mature city creates a number of challenges. One is displacement, a threat that has become more real in the District as land values have increased. Displacement not only affects District residents—particularly those of lower income—it also affects businesses and municipal operations that may be dislocated by rising rents and land prices. ^{205.6}

Whether the issue is displacement, the siting of locally undesirable uses, parking impacts, or threats to neighborhood character and stability, development creates tension in the District of Columbia. This tension will only mount as growth pressures increase, making it even more important to have sound land use policies and development review procedures that mitigate the effects of competing and conflicting uses. ^{205.7}

Figure 2.6 depicts the location of residential development in the city between 2000 and 2005. Of the 7,700 units of housing added, about one-third were located in Central Washington and 15 percent were located in Near Northwest. The Mid-City and Upper Northwest areas each absorbed about 12 percent of the District’s housing growth. About 20 percent of the new housing units were located east of the Anacostia River. However, much of this housing replaced units that were demolished, resulting in a very small net increase. ^{205.8}

Mobility and Access Changes ²⁰⁶

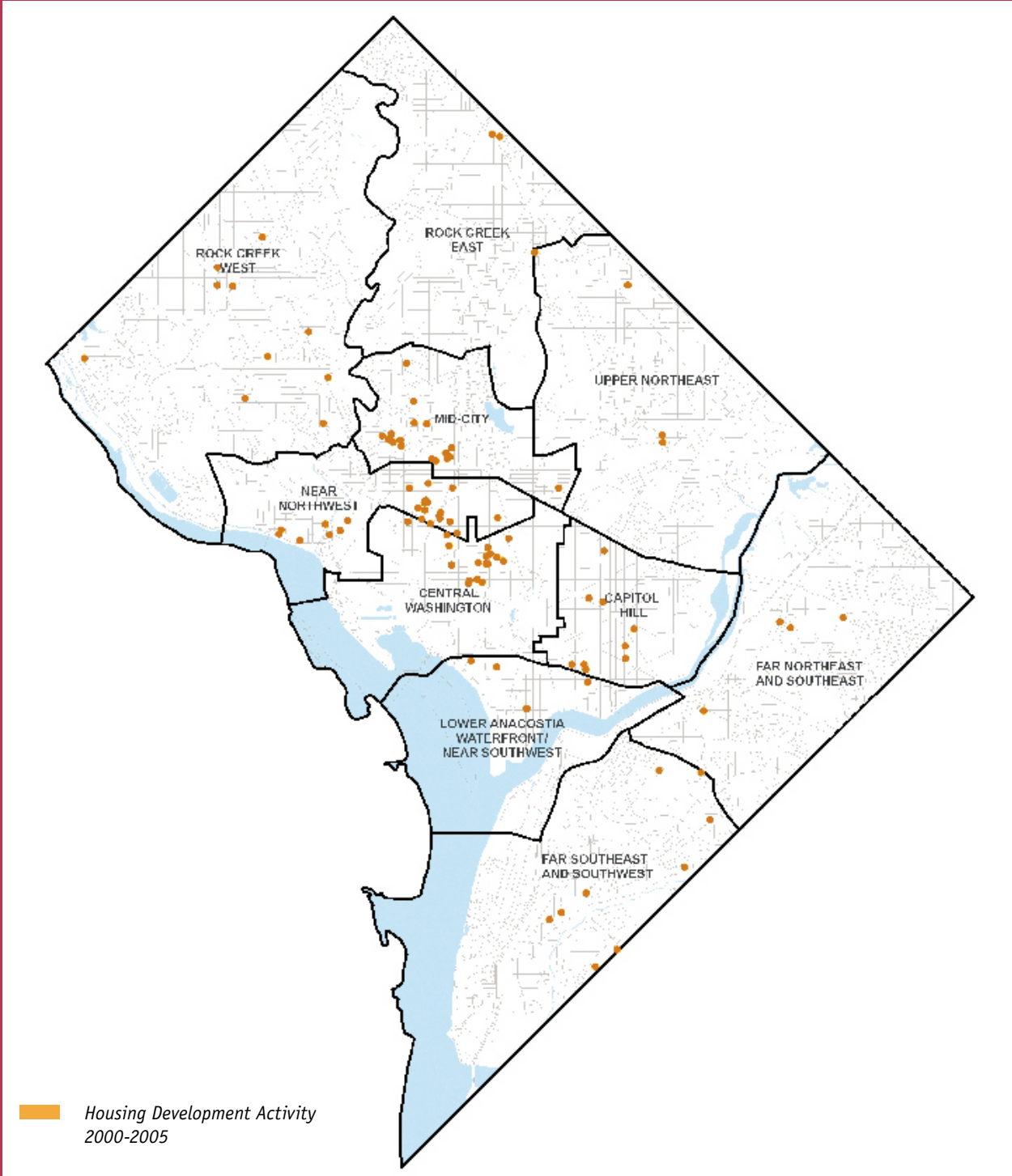
The Washington region faces significant transportation challenges. Decentralization has caused longer commutes, increased congestion, and deteriorating air quality. The nationally recognized 2005 Urban Mobility Report found that Washington was the third most congested region in the country, behind Los Angeles and San Francisco. Funding to maintain the existing transportation system, let alone expand the system to meet increased demand, is severely constrained. ^{206.1}

These challenges have propelled two opposing trends—one pushing development further out toward uncongested roads miles away from the city, and the other pushing development closer in, to areas where transit is available and shorter commutes are possible. They have also led to the recognition that increasing road capacity alone cannot solve the region’s traffic problems. Looking forward, increased investment in bus and rail transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and other modes of travel, will be needed to sustain economic growth. ^{206.2}

The 2005 Urban Mobility Report found that Washington was the third most congested region in the country, behind Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Figure 2.6:

Housing Development Activity, 2000-2005 205.9



Source: OP, 2006

The District already has one of the most extensive transit systems in the country and ranks second only to New York in the percentage of residents using transit to go to work. The Metrorail and bus systems complement the city's radial roadway system and maximize the movement of people across the city. However, many of those who need transit the most, including the poor and those with special needs, still face mobility problems. Transit often does not connect District residents to jobs in the suburbs, and it may be expensive or difficult to access. In addition, parts of the Metrorail system are approaching capacity. ^{206.3}

While it is difficult to predict the impacts that transportation constraints will have on the region over the next 20 years, linking land use decisions to transportation capacity will remain important. As with so many other aspects of planning in our region, regional planning and coordination with surrounding states and counties is the only way that effective solutions will be forged. ^{206.4}

Environmental Changes ²⁰⁷

The District of Columbia was sited to take advantage of the unique environment and landscape at the confluence of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Urbanization over the last 200 years has compromised almost every aspect of this environment, leaving us with one of the most polluted rivers in the country, air quality that fails to meet federal standards, and a city where heavy tree cover has declined by more than half in the last 30 years alone. Of course, these are not issues unique to Washington. On a global level, issues such as fossil fuel depletion, climate change, sea level rise, and deforestation may have even more far-reaching impacts on the way we live and work in the future. ^{207.1}

This Plan makes a conscious effort to promote natural resource conservation and environmental sustainability. It incorporates measurable goals such as reducing per capita energy consumption by one percent a year, recycling 45 percent of our solid waste stream, and making the Anacostia River fishable and swimmable by 2025. These goals can only be achieved through fundamental changes in the way we live and the way we build. In the future, "green" building and "low impact development" will need to become the norm rather than the exception. The concept of sustainability runs through much of the Comprehensive Plan, from the renewal of brownfield sites to a renewed commitment to environmental justice in all neighborhoods of the city. ^{207.2}



Parts of the Metrorail system are approaching capacity.

Technological advancements may have more of an impact on Washington than it might in other cities, given the city's role as a global and intellectual capital. The city is already a center of the information economy, and has demonstrated a strong pull for innovators from around the country and the world.

Technology Changes ²⁰⁸

Technology has changed how we live, work, and travel and it will continue to shape the District in unexpected ways. Twenty years ago, few predicted the scale at which computers would pervade every aspect of our lives. Since the 1980s, telecommuting has changed travel patterns; on-line purchases have changed retailing; and e-mail has changed the way business and government operate. ^{208.1}

It is hard to fathom how advancements yet to be made will affect us in the future. The only thing that is certain is that technology will change our lives, with potentially profound spatial impacts. Such change may have more of an impact on Washington than it might in other cities, given the city's role as a global and intellectual capital. The city is already a center of the information economy, and has demonstrated a strong pull for innovators from around the country and the world. ^{208.2}

One aspect of technological change is its potential to deepen economic divides in the city. In 2004, the National Poverty Center reported that 85 percent of the nation's White children had access to a home computer, compared to just 40 percent of Black and Latino children. Access to technology will be an important part of improving the well-being of District residents in the future. This will place a premium on education and training, and an emphasis on providing residents with the skills to use technology and access information. ^{208.3}

Security Changes ²⁰⁹

Security is not a new concern or challenge in the District of Columbia. As a capital city, we are used to a heightened level of risk and the visibility of military personnel and operations. As an urban center, we also face daily concerns about personal safety and crime. But security concerns have taken on a new meaning since September 2001. The attacks on Washington and New York changed the psyche of our city and ushered in an uncertainty about the future that still persists today. ^{209.1}

Over the past five years, we have struggled with the need to balance beauty, access, and openness with the need to protect our landmarks, government buildings, and officials from danger. The federal government has strived to discourage acts of terrorism through the design and management of public spaces and buildings, including the closing of some District streets and retrofitting of major landmarks. Security issues have also been cited in decisions to shift the federal workforce to more remote locations. They also have resulted in design standards for federally leased space that will reverberate through the regional office market for many years to come. ^{209.2}

These concerns are not likely to diminish in the future. The need to balance our desire for safety, accessibility, and aesthetics is one of the key challenges that this plan seeks to address. ^{209.3}

Fiscal Changes ²¹⁰

When the District received limited Home Rule in 1973, it incurred a variety of cost burdens, including the responsibility for providing many services that are typically provided by states. Revenue restrictions also were imposed, including the inability to impose a “commuter tax” on income earned in the city by non-residents. The result of these burdens and restrictions has been a financial “structural imbalance” that persists to this day. A 2002 report by the federal General Accounting Office estimated that the imbalance exceeded \$470 million a year. ^{210.1}

The imbalance is amplified by the large amount of land in the city that is owned by the federal government and therefore not subject to property tax. Indeed, 53 percent of all land in the District is non-taxable, and more than two-thirds of the income earned in the District cannot be locally taxed. ^{210.2}

One outcome of the imbalance is that District residents and businesses face the highest tax burden in the nation. Another is that major investments in infrastructure and capital improvements have been deferred. The District has hesitated to cut services, raise taxes or incur more debt, and instead has sought other remedies to reduce the imbalance. ^{210.3}

One of these remedies has been to “grow” the population of the District of Columbia. A well-publicized target of adding 100,000 residents to the city’s population was set in 2003, motivated in part by a desire to boost the number of taxpaying residents. The District has also worked to increase the income of current residents, which can in turn lift families out of poverty, generate tax revenues, and reduce social service costs. A key component of improving the city’s fiscal health as well as the economic prosperity of its residents is to increase the number of employed residents and thus the economic and tax base of the city. ^{210.4}

Fortunately, economic growth in the city has helped improve the District’s fiscal standing, at least in the short term. A decade ago, the District was on the brink of bankruptcy. The situation has improved markedly, in part as a result of actions taken by the Government of the District of Columbia. Despite the optimistic forecasts of the Comprehensive Plan, there is no guarantee that this good fortune will last. Prudent action is needed to avoid problems should future downturns take place. ^{210.5}

The District’s fiscal situation will continue to influence land use and economic development choices. It is currently driving the redevelopment of large former federal sites with tax-generating uses, creation of new retail centers that reduce the “leakage” of sales tax dollars to the suburbs, and development of high-income, high-density housing downtown and elsewhere. Such efforts may reduce the imbalance but are unlikely to eliminate it. The most effective strategies will combine revenue-raising strategies with strategies to break the cycle of poverty in District neighborhoods. ^{210.6}

A key component of improving the city’s fiscal health as well as the economic prosperity of its residents is to increase the number of employed residents and thus the economic and tax base of the city.



The “federal presence” remains Washington’s most prominent and visible asset.

Global City, Local City ²¹¹

One of the most obvious forces influencing planning in the District is the city’s dual role as a world capital and a residential community. There is the Washington of lore, the city of inaugural parades, museums, and monuments—the place that school textbooks describe as “belonging to all of America.” And there is the city most of us know, comprised of neighborhoods, shopping districts, schools, corner stores, churches, and parks. Even the Comprehensive Plan itself is divided into District and Federal Elements, suggesting that federal interests may not always align with the goals of the city’s residents and businesses. ^{211.1}

The tension between Washington’s global and local roles plays out in a number of ways. Conflicts around fiscal issues and security have already been noted. Issues such as embassy siting, plans for federal lands, funding for Metrorail, and Congressional oversight on local land use and public facility decisions have been the focus of much debate and discussion in the past. The District itself seems partitioned at times, with the federal government functioning as a “city within the city”. ^{211.2}

Yet in spite of these conflicts, the “federal presence” remains Washington’s most prominent and visible asset. It provides tens of thousands of jobs for District residents, attracts millions of visitors to the city, and sustains cultural institutions that would not otherwise be possible. It makes Washington an international and multi-cultural center, second only to New York on the eastern seaboard. The federal presence requires that our plans take a broader perspective than the metropolitan region, and recognize that we are more susceptible to global events than places like Baltimore, Detroit, and other cities of similar size. ^{211.3}

The District’s role in the world economy has become increasingly important during the past 50 years. The Association of Foreign Investors in Real Estate has ranked Washington as the top city in the world for foreign investment for three consecutive years. The region is one of the leading gateways for immigration into the United States. We are home to such institutions as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Our emergence as a global center has implications for our communication systems, our transportation and infrastructure needs, our cultural life, and our real estate and development markets. ^{211.4}

These changes create vast potential for increased prosperity. But they also create the threat of disruption and a changing identity for many parts of the city. City plans must clearly articulate the values to be preserved and the places to be protected as we contemplate where we as a city hope to be in 20 years and beyond. ^{211.5}

Looking Forward: Growth Forecasts ²¹²

The driving forces described in the last section suggest a different future for the District of Columbia than was imagined when the 1984 Comprehensive Plan was drafted. The 1984 Plan was prepared during a period of long-term population and economic decline. Even the Ward Plans prepared during the late 1980s and early 1990s focused on preventing neighborhood decline and unwanted intrusions. Today, the continued strength of the Washington economy, coupled with transportation and environmental limits to regional expansion, suggest that the city will capture a larger share of the region's growth in the future than it has in the past. This assumption is bolstered by an unprecedented amount of development in the “pipeline” and joint federal/District proposals for federal land transfers. ^{212.1}

Please refer to the Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan for a detailed discussion of the District's economic growth opportunities and challenges within the context of the region.

The growth forecasts used in this Comprehensive Plan are driven by two factors: land supply and regional growth projections. Each of these is described below. ^{212.2}

Land Supply ²¹³

Land supply in the District of Columbia includes “pipeline” sites, vacant infill sites, underutilized sites, large sites, and other sites. These categories are mutually exclusive, meaning there is no double counting between them. ^{213.1}

Pipeline sites are sites where specific development projects are already planned or under construction. Such sites comprise over 800 acres in the District. They represent 20,000 housing units and about 20 million square feet of commercial space. The degree of certainty that these projects will be built in the next 10 years is relatively high. ^{213.2}

Vacant infill sites comprise about 600 acres in the District and are not associated with any particular project or proposal. They are generally less than ten acres and include a mix of privately owned properties and publicly-owned sites. Some 440 acres of this land is residentially zoned, including about 160 acres of multi-family zoned land, and 280 acres of land zoned for single family and townhomes. About 40 vacant acres are commercially zoned and 20 vacant acres are industrially zoned. While vacant lots occur in all parts of the city, about half of the city's vacant land is located east of the Anacostia River. ^{213.3}

Underutilized sites comprise about 345 acres. For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, these are defined as commercially and industrially zoned properties containing structures with low assessed values. Examples might include auto body shops, car washes, and fast food restaurants located in high-density commercial districts. This does not necessarily mean these uses should



Housing construction at Wheeler Creek in the Congress Heights neighborhood

Hundreds of properties in the city are developed below the maximum square footage allowed by zoning. Some property owners may choose to replace what is on these lots today with something larger in the future.

be displaced—it simply means the private market will create pressure to replace them over time. The underutilized sites tend to be clustered along corridor streets such as New York Avenue, Benning Road, and Georgia Avenue. ^{213.4}

Large sites in the District include about a dozen properties or clusters of adjoining properties, with the potential for reuse during the next 20 years. They range in size from 25 acres to over 300 acres. They include sites that already contain extensive development, like DC Village and Reservation 13, and sites that are largely vacant, such as Poplar Point and the McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration site. These sites hold many possibilities for the future, from large mixed use communities to new parks and open spaces. In total, the large sites represent about 1,500 acres. Some have already been master planned for new uses; the future of others has yet to be determined. Some are federally owned, and some are owned by the District. The Office of Planning estimates that federally owned sites will account for less than 10 percent of the District’s job and household growth in the next 20 years. ^{213.5}

There are many other sites in the District where development could occur. These include approximately 2,000 vacant buildings, many of which contain multiple vacant housing units. Some of these buildings can be renovated and others are likely to be demolished and replaced. There are also freeways and railyards, in some cases with developable air rights above. There are at least eight aging housing projects that have been identified as possible “new communities.” There are also hundreds of properties in the city that are developed below the maximum square footage allowed by zoning. Some property owners may choose to replace what is on these lots today with something larger in the future. ^{213.6}

Table 2.1 summarizes vacant and underutilized commercial land within the District and provides an estimate of potential additional development that these lands could accommodate based on existing zoning. ^{213.7}

Table 2.1:

Vacant and Underutilized Lands Citywide ^{213.8}

	Acres	Dwelling Units*	Total Non-Residential (millions sq ft)
Vacant Land	588	11,000	8
Underutilized Sites	345	7,200	24

* Units rounded to the nearest 100



The Cooperative Forecasts ²¹⁴

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) coordinates socio-economic projections for the Washington region. These projections include households, population, and jobs and are expressed in five-year intervals, currently to 2030. Projections are made for the region as

a whole and for each of its 17 jurisdictions. They take into account national economic trends, local demographics, and the local plans and policies of the region’s cities and counties. ^{214.1}

At the regional level, the projections have been relatively accurate since the forecasting program began in 1975. Actual growth during the last 30 years has tracked closely with what the forecasts predicted. ^{214.2}

In 2005, the MWCOG board approved projections showing the region would add one million jobs between 2005 and 2025. The projections further show an addition of 550,000 households and 1.35 million residents during this time period. About 43 percent of this growth is expected to occur in “outer” suburbs such as Loudoun, Frederick, and Prince William Counties. The “inner” suburbs of Fairfax, Montgomery, and Prince George’s Counties are expected to absorb about 42 percent. The remaining 15 percent is expected to occur within the District, Arlington, and Alexandria. ^{214.3}

Figure 2.7 indicates the location of regional activity clusters in the Washington Metropolitan Area. These clusters were identified cooperatively by jurisdictions in the MWCOG area in 2002. They are intended to provide an organizing framework for directing regional job and housing growth. As the Figure indicates, some of the clusters are more than 40 miles from the District and are larger in land area than all of Central Washington. Despite the designation of these areas, MWCOG indicates that only about 40 percent of the region’s housing growth and 70 percent of its job growth are projected to occur in the regional activity centers during the next 20 years. This means that increased congestion and urban sprawl are likely. Expanded coordination in land use and transportation planning among the region’s cities and counties will be essential to keep the region sustainable. ^{214.4}



Based on building permits, there were 8,100 units added and about 2,100 units demolished between 2000 and 2005, for a net gain of about 6,000 units.

Projected Growth, 2005-2025 ²¹⁵

The District’s projections are based on a combination of the regional forecasts, approved and planned development, and land supply estimates. Table 2.2 provides a summary. ^{215.1}

Table 2.2:

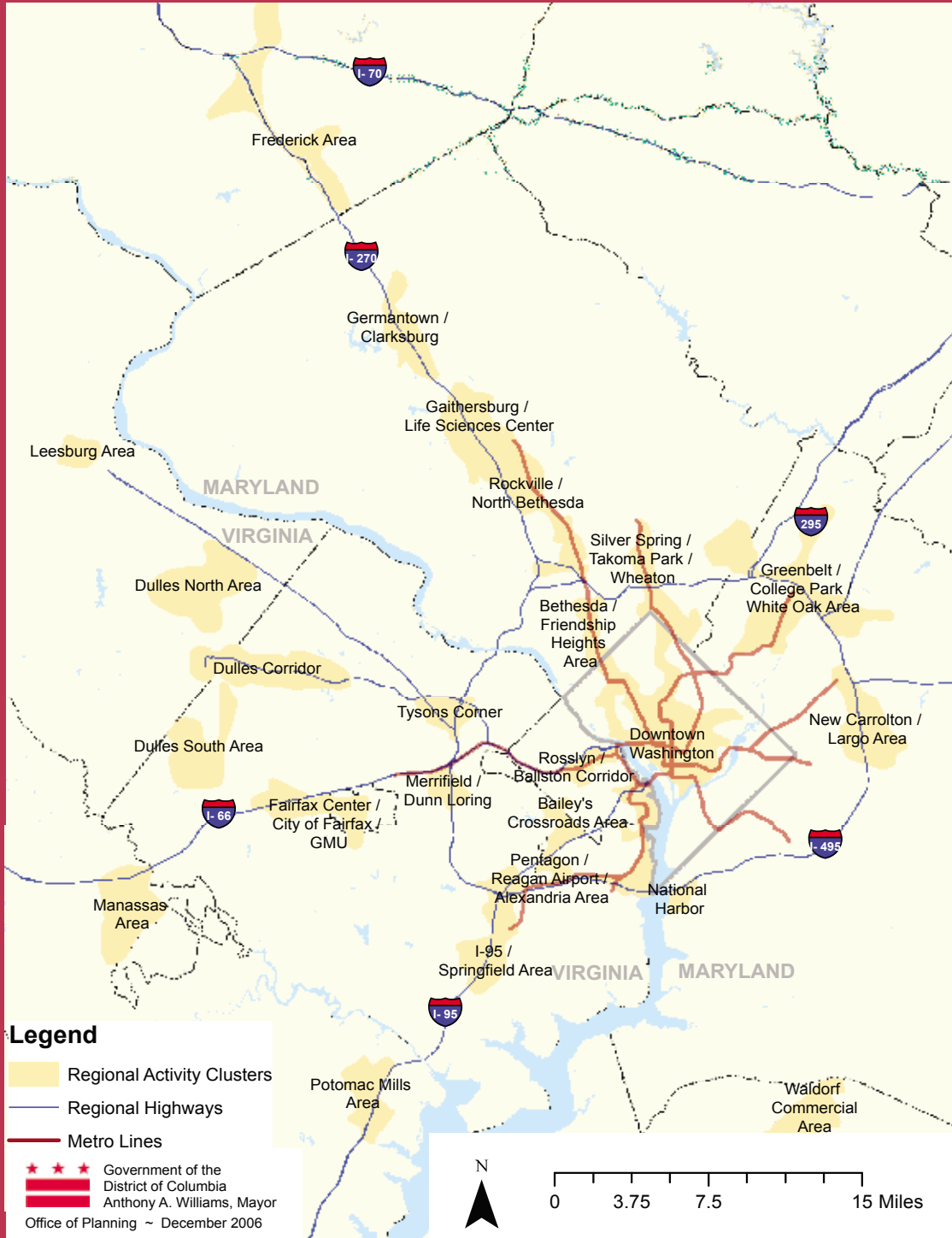
Population, Household and Job Forecasts, 2005-2025 ^{215.2}

	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	20-year change
Households	254,700	265,800	279,700	295,700	311,800	57,100
Population*	576,700	599,300	630,000	664,000	698,000	121,200
Employment	745,400	783,800	819,600	845,700	870,400	125,000

* The District’s population includes about 37,200 people living in group quarters (dormitories, institutions, nursing homes, etc.). For projection purposes, this population is expected to remain about the same over the next 20 years.

Figure 2.7:

Regional Activity Clusters 214.5



Household and Population Growth

Because the Census is only taken every 10 years, estimates of population and household growth begin with 2005 “baseline” estimates. These figures are based on the 2000 Census, plus an estimate of net new households and residents added between 2000 and 2005. ^{215.3}

The city’s estimates do not match the U.S. Census estimates, which show a loss of 20,000 residents during the 2000-2005 period. District estimates are based on a series of indicators, such as net housing additions, vacancy rates, school enrollment, IRS tax returns, and utility connections. The Census’ annual estimate is not used as the baseline in part because it has historically underestimated the District’s population.* For example, the annual Census estimate for 1999 was 53,000 people below the actual number reported during the decennial census in 2000. ^{215.4}

Based on building permits, there were 8,100 units added and about 2,100 units demolished between 2000 and 2005, for a net gain of about 6,000 units. Accounting for vacancies, the 2005 household total is estimated at 254,700. Population has been relatively stable and is currently estimated at 576,700. The average household size declined from 2.16 to 2.12 between 2000 and 2005. ^{215.5}

The 2005-2010 growth increment consists of actual projects that are now under construction. This growth will result in a net gain of about 11,000 households and is expected to increase the city’s population to almost 600,000 by the 2010 census. This assumes that household size will stay at 2.12. ^{215.6}

Growth forecasts for 2010-2015 are based on specific projects that are still in the planning stages. About 14,000 households are expected to be added during this period, bringing the city’s population to 630,000 by 2015. ^{215.7}

From 2015 to 2025, much of the District’s growth is expected to occur on the large sites described earlier in this Element. Assuming the pace of growth experienced between 2005 and 2015 is sustained, another 32,000 households will be added. Household size is expected to remain at 2.12, bringing the total population to 698,000. This is approximately the same number of residents the District had in 1973, but residing in about 50,000 more households. ^{215.8}

The biggest unknown in the forecasts is household size. If the District continues to lose families and attract only small one- and two-person households, it may well add 57,000 households in the next 20 years with no gain in population. Household size will only be maintained at its current level

** In Spring 2006, the District successfully challenged the US Census 2005 population estimate. The Census revised the estimate to 582,000, representing an increase of 10,000 residents since 2000. The District’s official forecasts reflect a lower 2005 household size than was used in the Census challenge (2.12 vs 2.16), and consequently reflect lower baseline figures.*

Household size will only be maintained at its current level if the District retains its families, keeps young professionals in the city as they form families, and provides a healthy environment for new families in its established single family and rowhouse neighborhoods.

if the District retains its families, keeps young professionals in the city as they form families, and provides a healthy environment for new families in its established single family and rowhouse neighborhoods. Indeed, the number of families with children in the District declined from 62,000 in 1990 to 51,000 in 2000, with an attendant drop in citywide household size. ^{215.9}

Other factors affecting population forecasts are housing costs, immigration, and K-12 school quality. Higher housing costs have already caused families to “double up” in some parts of the city, and may result in adult children returning home or living at home longer. Immigration also may drive increases in household sizes, as it has in New York, San Francisco, and other gateway cities. Improvement in the District’s public schools will make the city a more attractive place for families with young children. These forces could offset some of the decline in household size. ^{215.10}

The household and population forecasts suggest that the District of Columbia will capture 10 percent of the region’s growth during 2005-2025. By 2025, the District will represent 11 percent of the region’s population, which is a slightly smaller share than it has today. ^{215.11}

Employment Growth

Employment forecasts are based on estimates from the District Department of Employment Services. The baseline (2005) estimates build on monthly data reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Dun & Bradstreet, and other sources, with adjustments for self-employment and military personnel. The forecasts from 2005 to 2015 are largely based on actual projects under construction in the city, as well as office, retail, hotel, industrial, and institutional development that is currently planned and proposed. ^{215.12}

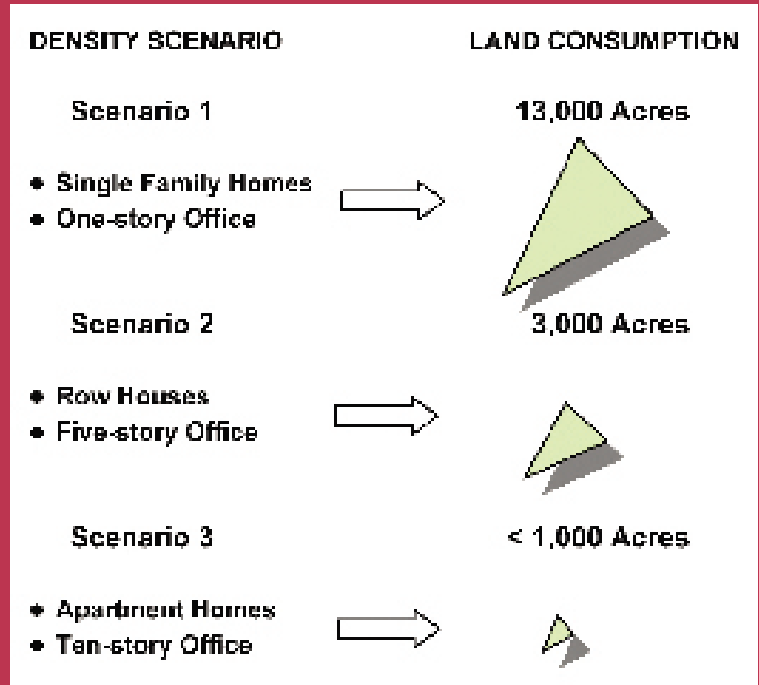
Beyond 2015, the projections presume a continuation of 2000-2015 trends. Continued growth in the service sector is expected, with about 5,000 jobs a year added between 2015 and 2025. Between 2005 and 2025, the District is expected to add 125,000 new jobs, bringing the citywide total to 870,400 jobs. ^{215.13}

The employment forecasts suggest that the District of Columbia will capture 13 percent of the region’s job growth during 2005-2025. By 2025, the District will have 21 percent of the region’s jobs, which is a slightly smaller share than it has today. ^{215.14}

Translating the Forecasts into Demand for Land 215.15

How much land does it take to accommodate 57,000 housing units and 125,000 jobs? The answer depends on the density of new development. Other factors, such as the size of housing units, the types of jobs being created, and the amount of land set aside for parking and open space also weigh in. The diagram at right shows three scenarios. 215.16

The first illustrates the land that would be required for single family homes (at 6 units per acre) and one-story campus-style office buildings. About 13,000 acres would be necessary. The second scenario shows land requirements for housing built at row house densities (25 units per acre), with the jobs housed in five-story office buildings. About 3,000 acres would be required. The third scenario shows land requirements for housing built at apartment densities of about 125 units per acre, with the jobs housed in ten-story office buildings. Land consumption drops to under 1,000 acres. 215.17



Of course, the diagram simplifies the actual dynamics of how land is used and developed. It also leaves out land that must be set aside for parks, public facilities, and infrastructure. The District expects some combination of high, medium, and low density development during the next 20 years. However, high land costs and the scarcity of land in the city make denser development more likely on most of the remaining vacant sites. 215.18

Growth by Planning Area

Tables 2.3 and 2.4 show where household and job growth is expected to take place within the city over the next 20 years. The estimates reflect the location of planned development projects, vacant and underutilized sites, and Comprehensive Plan land use designations and policies. ^{215.19}

Table 2.3:

Projected Distribution of Household Growth by Planning Area ^{215.20}

Planning Area	2005 Households	2025 Projected Households	Net Increase	% of District's total growth in each area
Capitol Hill	21,600	25,400	3,800	6.7%
Central Washington	8,000	16,400	8,400	14.7%
Far NE/SE	29,700	35,200	5,500	9.6%
Far SE/SW	22,800	30,100	6,100	10.7%
Lower Anacostia Waterfront/ Near Southwest	8,100	17,500	9,400	16.5%
Mid-City	35,200	41,600	6,400	11.2%
Near Northwest	37,100	43,200	6,100	10.7%
Rock Creek East	25,400	28,800	3,400	6.0%
Rock Creek West	42,400	45,300	2,900	5.1%
Upper Northeast	24,400	29,500	5,100	8.9%
Total	254,700	311,800	57,100	100.0%

Source: DC Office of Planning, 2006

Table 2.4:

Projected Distribution of Job Growth by Planning Area ^{215.21}

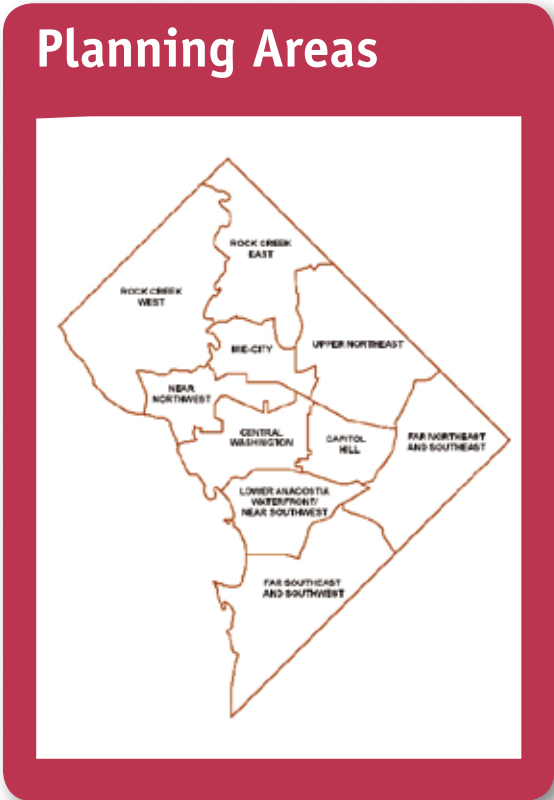
Planning Area	2005 Employment	2025 Projected Employment	Net Change	% of District's total growth in each area
Capitol Hill	17,900	22,000	4,100	3.3 %
Central Washington	424,000	490,800	66,800	53.4%
Far NE/SE	12,400	16,100	3,700	3.0%
Far SE/SW	21,800	27,800	6,000	4.8%
Lower Anacostia Waterfront/ Near Southwest	32,500	57,900	25,400	20.3 %
Mid-City	28,300	32,900	4,600	3.7%
Near Northwest	89,400	93,300	3,900	3.1%
Rock Creek East	31,600	33,500	1,900	1.5%
Rock Creek West	48,500	51,600	3,100	2.5%
Upper Northeast	39,000	44,500	5,500	4.4%
Total	745,400	870,400	125,000	100.0%

Source: DC Office of Planning, 2006

The tables indicate that about 30 percent of the city’s future household growth will occur in Central Washington and along the Lower Anacostia Waterfront. This reflects current and expected development in and around Downtown, the North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMA) area, the Southwest Waterfront, the Near Southeast, and on large sites such as Poplar Point. Other areas east of the Anacostia River represent about 20 percent of the projected total. The Mid-City and Near North areas also represent a combined total of 20 percent, with most of the gain expected east of 14th Street NW, especially around Howard University, Columbia Heights, and Shaw. Additional data and guidance for each of these areas is provided in the Area Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. ^{215.22}

Employment growth will be concentrated in Central Washington and along the Anacostia River. These two areas are expected to absorb three-quarters of the city’s job growth, principally in places like the South Capitol Street Corridor, the Southeast Federal Center, and the New York Avenue Metro Station area. About five percent of the city’s job growth is projected to take place in Upper Northeast, especially along the New York Avenue corridor. Another eight percent is expected east of the Anacostia River on sites such as St. Elizabeths and the Minnesota Avenue Metro Station Area. The remaining six planning areas represent less than 15 percent of the city’s job growth, most associated with institutional uses and infill office and retail development along corridor streets. ^{215.23}

Employment growth will be concentrated in Central Washington and along the Anacostia River. In fact, these areas are expected to absorb three-quarters of the city’s job growth, principally in places like the South Capitol Street Corridor, the Southeast Federal Center, and the New York Avenue Metro Station area.



For more information on employment growth and growth sectors, please refer to the Economic Development Element.

As time unfolds, departures from the District’s forecasts are likely. Future amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may be considered in response to changing trends, new projections, and shifting expectations for the future.

^{215.24}

The following principles acknowledge that the benefits and opportunities of living in the District are not available to everyone equally and that divisions in the city—physical, social and economic—must be overcome to move from vision to reality.

From Vision to Reality: Guiding Principles ²¹⁶

The first two sections of this Element provided the context for the Comprehensive Plan Revision. This section establishes 36 underlying principles for the future that reflect this context. Most of these principles are based on “A Vision for Growing an Inclusive City,” the policy framework for the Comprehensive Plan Revision endorsed by the Council of the District of Columbia in 2004. However, statements from the previous Comprehensive Plan and other documents that set the frame for more detailed planning in the District also are incorporated. Policies in each Element of the Comprehensive Plan elaborate on the city’s commitment to following these principles. ^{216.1}

The principles are grouped into five sections:

- Managing Growth and Change
- Creating Successful Neighborhoods
- Increasing Access to Education and Employment
- Connecting the City
- Building Green and Healthy Communities. ^{216.2}

The principles acknowledge that the benefits and opportunities of living in the District are not available to everyone equally and that divisions in the city—physical, social and economic—must be overcome to move from vision to reality. ^{216.3}

Managing Growth and Change: Guiding Principles ²¹⁷

The following principles acknowledge that the benefits and opportunities of living in the District are not available to everyone equally and that divisions in the city—physical, social and economic—must be overcome to move from vision to reality.

1. Change in the District of Columbia is both inevitable and desirable. The key is to manage change in ways that protect the positive aspects of life in the city and reduce negatives such as poverty, crime, and homelessness. ^{217.1}
2. A city must be diverse to thrive, and the District cannot sustain itself by only attracting small, affluent households. To retain residents and attract a diverse population, the city should provide services that support families. A priority must be placed on sustaining and promoting safe neighborhoods offering health care, quality education, transportation, child care, parks, libraries, arts and cultural facilities, and housing for families. ^{217.2}
3. Diversity also means maintaining and enhancing the District's mix of housing types. Housing should be developed for households of different sizes, including growing families as well as singles and couples. ^{217.3}
4. The District needs both residential and non-residential growth to survive. Non-residential growth benefits residents by creating jobs and opportunities for less affluent households to increase their income. ^{217.4}
5. Much of the growth that is forecast during the next 20 years is expected to occur on large sites that are currently isolated from the rest of the city. Rather than letting these sites develop as gated or self-contained communities, they should become part of the city's urban fabric through the continuation of street patterns, open space corridors and compatible development patterns where they meet existing neighborhoods. Since the District is landlocked, its large sites must be viewed as extraordinarily valuable assets. Not all should be used right away—some should be “banked” for the future. ^{217.5}
6. Redevelopment and infill opportunities along corridors and near transit stations will be an important component of reinvigorating and enhancing our neighborhoods. Development on such sites must not compromise the integrity of stable neighborhoods and must be designed to respect the broader community context. Adequate infrastructure capacity should be ensured as growth occurs. ^{217.6}
7. Growth in the District benefits not only District residents, but the region as well. By accommodating a larger number of jobs and residents, we can create the critical mass needed to support new services, sustain public transit, and improve regional environmental quality. ^{217.7}

Creating Successful Neighborhoods: Guiding Principles ²¹⁸

8. The residential character of neighborhoods must be protected, maintained and improved. Many District neighborhoods possess social, economic, historic, and physical qualities that make them unique and desirable places in which to live. These qualities can lead to development and redevelopment pressures that threaten the very qualities that make the neighborhoods attractive. These pressures must be controlled through zoning and other means to ensure that neighborhood character is preserved and enhanced. ^{218.1}
9. Many neighborhoods include commercial and institutional uses that contribute to their character. Neighborhood businesses, retail districts, schools, park and recreational facilities, houses of worship and other public facilities all make our communities more livable. These uses provide strong centers that reinforce neighborhood identity and provide destinations and services for residents. They too must be protected and stabilized. ^{218.2}
10. The recent housing boom has triggered a crisis of affordability in the city, creating a hardship for many District residents and changing the character of neighborhoods. The preservation of existing affordable housing and the production of new affordable housing both are essential to avoid a deepening of racial and economic divides in the city. Affordable renter- and owner-occupied housing production and preservation is central to the idea of growing more inclusively. ^{218.3}
11. The District of Columbia contains many buildings and sites that contribute to its identity. Protecting historic resources through preservation laws and other programs is essential to retain the heritage that defines and distinguishes the city. Special efforts should be made to conserve row houses as the defining element of many District neighborhoods, and to restore neighborhood “main streets” through sensitive renovation and updating. ^{218.4}
12. Each neighborhood is an integral part of a diverse larger community that contributes to the District’s identity. Growing an inclusive city means that all neighborhoods should share in the overall social responsibilities of the community, including housing the homeless, feeding the hungry, and accommodating the disabled. ^{218.5}
13. Enhanced public safety is one of the District’s highest priorities and is vital to the health of our neighborhoods. The District must continue to improve safety and security, and sustain a high level of emergency police, fire, and medical assistance. Moreover, the District must engage in appropriate planning and capital investments to reduce the likelihood and severity of future emergencies. ^{218.6}
14. Confidence in government begins at the neighborhood level. It is built block-by-block, based on day-to-day relationships and experiences. Meaningful citizen participation and quality, responsive neighborhood services are essential to sustain successful neighborhoods. ^{218.7}
15. Public input in decisions about land use and development is an essential part of creating successful neighborhoods, from development of the Comprehensive Plan to every facet of its implementation. ^{218.8}

Policies and actions to support neighborhoods cut across many Comprehensive Plan topics and appear throughout this document. Wherever they may appear, these policies are underpinned by the common goal of conserving functioning, stable neighborhoods and improving those that need redirection. ^{218.9}

Increasing Access to Education and Employment: Guiding Principles ²¹⁹

16. Increasing access to jobs and education by District residents is fundamental to improving the lives and economic well being of District residents. Education must equip students with the skills and tools to succeed. ^{219.1}
17. An economically strong and viable District of Columbia is essential to the economic health and well being of the region. Thus, a broad spectrum of private and public growth (with an appropriate level of supporting infrastructure) should be encouraged. The District's economic development strategies must capitalize on the city's location at the center of the region's transportation and communication systems. ^{219.2}
18. Increasing access to education and employment is linked to broader social goals such as strengthening families, creating a better future for the city's youth, and reducing chronic and concentrated poverty. Therefore, physical plans for the city must be accompanied by plans and programs to improve our educational system, improve literacy and job training, and link residents to quality jobs. ^{219.3}
19. The overarching goals of the Comprehensive Plan cannot be achieved without sustained investment in public school and library facilities. The physical condition of these facilities must be improved before the vision of a more inclusive city can be truly achieved. ^{219.4}
20. Colleges and universities make the District an intellectual capital as well as a political capital. They are an essential part of the District's plans to grow its "knowledge-based" economy, improve access to learning, and broaden economic prosperity for all District residents. Sustaining our colleges and universities is important, as is protecting the integrity of the communities of which they are a part. Encouraging access to higher education for all residents is vitally important, as is locating higher education facilities in neighborhoods currently underserved by such facilities. ^{219.5}
21. Land development policies should be focused to create job opportunities for District residents. This means that sufficient land should be planned and zoned for new job centers in areas with high unemployment and under-employment. A mix of employment opportunities to meet the needs of residents with varied job skills should be provided. ^{219.6}
22. Providing more efficient, convenient, and affordable transportation for residents to access jobs in the District and in the surrounding region is critical to achieve the goal of increasing District residents' access to employment. ^{219.7}
23. Downtown should be strengthened as the region's major employment center, as its cultural center; as a center for government, tourism and international business; and as an exciting urban mixed-use neighborhood. Policies should strive to increase the number of jobs for District residents, enhance retail opportunities, promote access to Downtown from across the District and the region, and restore Downtown's prominence as the heart of the city. ^{219.8}
24. Despite the recent economic resurgence in the city, the District has yet to reach its full economic potential. Expanding the economy means increasing shopping and services for many District neighborhoods, bringing tourists beyond the National Mall and into the city's business districts, and creating more opportunities for local entrepreneurs and small businesses. The District's economic development expenditures should help support local businesses and provide economic benefits to the community. ^{219.9}

Connecting the City: Guiding Principles ²²⁰

25. Increased mobility can no longer be achieved simply by building more roads. The priority must be on investment in other forms of transportation, particularly transit. Mobility can be enhanced further by improving the connections between different transportation modes, improving traveler safety and security, and increasing system efficiency. ^{220.1}
26. Transportation facilities, including streets, bridges, transit, sidewalks, and paths, provide access to land and they provide mobility for residents and others. Investments in the transportation network must be balanced to serve local access needs for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, autos and delivery trucks as well as the needs of residents and others to move around and through the city. ^{220.2}
27. Washington's wide avenues are a lasting legacy of the 1791 L'Enfant Plan and are still one of the city's most distinctive features. The "great streets" of the city should be reinforced as an element of Washington's design through transportation, streetscape, and economic development programs. ^{220.3}
28. Connections to and between the city's celebrated open spaces, such as Rock Creek Park and the National Mall, should be improved. At the same time, creation of new parks along the Anacostia River and enhancement of the federal Fort Circle Parks, should be supported to connect communities and enhance "green infrastructure" in the city. ^{220.4}
29. The District continues to grow in reputation as an international cultural center. To sustain this growth, it must continue to support a healthy arts and cultural community through its land use, housing, and economic development policies. The power of the arts to express the identity of each community while connecting neighborhoods and residents must be recognized. ^{220.5}
30. Residents are connected by places of "common ground," such as Union Station and Eastern Market. Such public gathering places should be protected, and should be created in all parts of the city as development and change occurs. ^{220.6}
31. The District's communities are connected by a shared heritage of urban design, reflecting the legacy of the L'Enfant Plan, the McMillan Plan, the Height Act of 1910, and preservation of much of the historic urban fabric. After more than two centuries of building, the nation's capital is still a remarkable place. Urban design and streetscape policies must retain the historic, majestic, and beautiful qualities that make Washington unique among American cities. ^{220.7}

Building Green and Healthy Communities: Guiding Principles²²¹

32. The site selected for the national capital was characterized by a very special topography, including hills interlaced with broad rivers and streams. The topography allowed for the construction of a special collection of buildings that give the District a unique profile. This profile has been further protected by local and national ordinances and must continue to be protected in the future. This should include the protection of views and vistas and the enhancement of city gateways. ^{221.1}
33. The earth, water, air, and biotic resources of the District must be protected. Furthermore, such resources should be restored and enhanced where they have been degraded by past human activities. In particular, reforestation of the District and maintenance of its tree cover should be emphasized to sustain the District's reputation as one of America's "greenest" cities. ^{221.2}
34. As the nation's capital, the District should be a role model for environmental sustainability. Building construction and renovation should minimize the use of non-renewable resources, promote energy and water conservation, and reduce harmful effects on the natural environment. ^{221.3}
35. Planning decisions should improve the health of District residents by reducing exposure to hazardous materials, improving the quality of surface and groundwater, and encouraging land use patterns and land uses that reduce air pollution and facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel. ^{221.4}
36. The District's parks and open spaces provide health, recreational, psychological, aesthetic, and ecological benefits that contribute to the quality of life. Maintenance and improvement of existing parks, and increased access to open space and recreation across the city are basic elements of the city's vision. The District's public open spaces should be protected against exploitation, and their recreational and environmental values should be conserved. ^{221.5}

Neighborhood Conservation areas have very little vacant or underutilized land. Maintenance of existing land uses and community character is anticipated over the next 20 years. Where change occurs, it will be modest in scale and will consist primarily of scattered site infill housing, public facilities, and institutional uses

Putting It All Together ²²²

Taken together, the driving forces, projections, and guiding principles in the Framework Element provide a foundation for planning the future of the District of Columbia. The remaining elements of the Comprehensive Plan examine these conditions in much more detail and outline the journey from vision to reality. ^{222.1}

Generalized Policy Map ²²³

Purpose of the Policy Map

The purpose of the Generalized Policy Map is to categorize how different parts of the District may change between 2005 and 2025. It highlights areas where more detailed policies are necessary, both within the Comprehensive Plan and in follow-up plans, to manage this change. ^{223.1}

The map should be used to guide land use decision-making in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan text, the Future Land Use Map, and other Comprehensive Plan maps. Boundaries on the map are to be interpreted in concert with these other sources, as well as the actual physical characteristics of each location shown. ^{223.2}

Categories

The Generalized Policy Map identifies the following four different types of areas: Neighborhood Conservation Areas, Neighborhood Enhancement Areas, Land Use Change Areas, and Commercial/Mixed Use Areas. ^{223.3}

Neighborhood Conservation Areas

Neighborhood Conservation areas have very little vacant or underutilized land. They are primarily residential in character. Maintenance of existing land uses and community character is anticipated over the next 20 years. Where change occurs, it will be modest in scale and will consist primarily of scattered site infill housing, public facilities, and institutional uses. Major changes in density over current (2005) conditions are not expected but some new development and reuse opportunities are anticipated. Neighborhood Conservation Areas that are designated “PDR” on the Future Land Use Map are expected to be retained with the mix of industrial, office, and retail uses they have historically provided. ^{223.4}

The guiding philosophy in Neighborhood Conservation Areas is to conserve and enhance established neighborhoods. Limited development and redevelopment opportunities do exist within these areas but they are small in scale. The diversity of land uses and building types in these areas should be maintained and new development and alterations should be compatible with the existing scale and architectural character of each area. Densities in Neighborhood Conservation Areas are guided by the Future Land Use Map. ^{223.5}

Neighborhood Enhancement Areas

Neighborhood Enhancement Areas are neighborhoods with substantial amounts of vacant residentially zoned land. They are primarily residential in character. Many of these areas are characterized by a patchwork of existing homes and individual vacant lots, some privately owned and others owned by the public sector or non-profit developers. These areas present opportunities for compatible small-scale infill development, including new single family homes, townhomes, and other density housing types. Land uses that reflect the historical mixture and diversity of each community should be encouraged. ^{223.6}

The guiding philosophy in Neighborhood Enhancement Areas is to ensure that new development “fits-in” and responds to the existing character, natural features, and existing/planned infrastructure capacity. New housing should be encouraged to improve the neighborhood and must be consistent with the land use designation on the Future Land Use Map. The unique and special qualities of each area should be maintained and conserved, and overall neighborhood character should be protected as development takes place. Publicly-owned open space within these areas should be preserved and enhanced to make these communities more attractive and desirable. ^{223.7}

The main difference between Neighborhood Enhancement and Neighborhood Conservation Areas is the large amount of vacant land that exists in the Enhancement Areas. Neighborhood Enhancement Areas often contain many acres of undeveloped lots, whereas Neighborhood Conservation Areas appear to be “built out.” As infill development takes place on undeveloped lots, special care must be taken to avoid displacement nearby. Existing housing should be enhanced through rehabilitation assistance. New development in these areas should improve the real estate market, reduce crime and blight, and attract complementary new uses and services that better serve the needs of existing and future residents. ^{223.8}

Land Use Change Areas

Land Use Change Areas are areas where change to a different land use from what exists today is anticipated. In some cases, the Future Land Use Map depicts the specific mix of uses expected for these areas. In other cases, the Future Land Use Map shows these sites as “Federal”, indicating the District does not have the authority to determine land uses, but expects a change by 2025. ^{223.9}

There are more than two dozen Land Use Change Areas identified on the Policy Map. They include many of the city’s large development opportunity sites, and other smaller sites that are undergoing redevelopment or that are anticipated to undergo redevelopment. Together, they represent much of the city’s supply of vacant and underutilized land. ^{223.10}

The guiding philosophy in the Land Use Change Areas is to encourage and facilitate new development and promote the adaptive reuse of existing structures.



Barracks Row is a Main Street Mixed Use corridor.



Penn Branch shopping center is a neighborhood commercial center.

The guiding philosophy in the Land Use Change Areas is to encourage and facilitate new development and promote the adaptive reuse of existing structures. Many of these areas have the capacity to become mixed-use communities containing housing, retail shops, services, workplaces, parks and civic facilities. The Comprehensive Plan's Area Elements provide additional policies to guide development and redevelopment within the Land Use Change Areas, including the desired mix of uses in each area. 223.11

As Land Use Change Areas are redeveloped, the District aspires to create high quality environments that include exemplary site and architectural design and that are compatible with and do not negatively impact nearby neighborhoods. Programs to avoid and mitigate any undesirable impacts of development of the Land Use Change Areas upon adjacent neighborhoods should be required as necessary. 223.12

Commercial/Mixed Use Areas

These classifications correspond to the city's business districts, many of which form the heart of its neighborhoods. Five categories are used, defining the physical and economic character of each area along with generalized long-range conservation and development objectives. The commercial areas defined are: "Main Street mixed use corridors," "neighborhood commercial centers," "multi-neighborhood commercial centers", "regional commercial centers," and "central employment area." 223.13

Main Street Mixed Use Corridors: These are traditional commercial business corridors with a concentration of older storefronts along the street. The service area for Main Streets can vary from one neighborhood (e.g., 14th Street Heights or Barracks Row) to multiple neighborhoods (e.g., Dupont Circle, H Street, or Adams Morgan). Their common feature is that they have a pedestrian-oriented environment with traditional storefronts. Many have upper story residential or office uses. Conservation and enhancement of these corridors is desired to foster economic and housing opportunities and serve neighborhood needs. Any development or redevelopment that occurs should support transit use and enhance the pedestrian environment. 223.14

Neighborhood Commercial Centers: Neighborhood Commercial Centers meet the day-to-day needs of residents and workers in the adjacent neighborhoods. Their service area is usually less than one mile. Typical uses include convenience stores, sundries, small food markets, supermarkets, branch banks, restaurants, and basic services such as dry cleaners, hair cutting, and child care. Office space for small businesses, such as local real estate and insurance offices, doctors and dentists, and similar uses, also may be found in such locations. 223.15

Unlike Main Street Retail Corridors, the Neighborhood Commercial Centers include both auto-oriented centers and pedestrian-oriented shopping areas. Examples include Penn Branch Shopping Center on Pennsylvania Avenue, SE and the Spring Valley Shopping Center on Massachusetts Avenue, NW. New development and redevelopment within Neighborhood Commercial Areas must be managed to conserve the economic viability of these areas while allowing additional development that complements existing uses. 223.16

Multi-Neighborhood Centers: Multi-neighborhood centers contain many of the same activities as neighborhood centers but in greater depth and variety. Their service area is typically one to three miles. These centers are generally found at major intersections and along key transit routes. These centers might include supermarkets, general merchandise stores, drug stores, restaurants, specialty shops, apparel stores, and a variety of service-oriented businesses. These centers also may include office space for small businesses, although their primary function remains retail trade. 223.17

Examples of multi-neighborhood business centers include Hechinger Mall, Brentwood Shopping Center, and Skyland Shopping Center. Mixed-use infill development at these centers should be encouraged to provide new retail and service uses, and additional housing and job opportunities. Transit improvements to these centers are also desirable. 223.18

Regional Centers: Regional centers have the largest range of commercial functions outside the Central Employment Area and are likely to have major department stores, many specialty shops, concentrations of restaurants, movies and other leisure or entertainment facilities. They typically draw patrons from across the city, as well as patrons from nearby suburban areas. A large office component is also associated with regional centers. As with Multi-Neighborhood Centers, infill development at Regional Centers should provide new retail, entertainment, service uses, additional housing, and employment opportunities where feasible. 223.19

These centers are generally located along major arterials and are served by transit, and typically generate significant demand for parking. Off-street parking may be provided on a cooperative/shared basis within the area, using both self-contained and nearby commercial parking lots and garages. Heights and densities in regional centers should be appropriate to the scale and function of development in adjoining communities, and should be further guided by policies in the Land Use Element and the Area Elements. Examples of regional centers include Friendship Heights and Georgetown. 223.20

Central Employment Area: The Central Employment Area is the business and retail heart of the District and the metropolitan area. It has the widest variety of commercial uses, including but not limited to major government and corporate offices; retail, cultural, and entertainment uses; and hotels,



Brentwood Shopping Center is an example of a multi-neighborhood commercial center.



Friendship Heights is a regional commercial center.



Downtown retail in the Central Employment Area.

restaurants, and other hospitality uses. The Central Employment Area draws patrons, workers, and visitors from across the region. The Comprehensive Plan's Land Use and Economic Development Elements, and the Central Washington Area Element and Anacostia Waterfront Element provide additional guidance, policies and actions related to the Central Employment Area. ^{223.21}

Other Areas

The Generalized Policy Map also identifies parks and open space, federal lands, Downtown Washington, and major institutional land uses. The fact that these areas are not designated as Conservation, Enhancement, or Change does not mean they are exempt from the policies of the Comprehensive Plan or will remain static. Park and open space will be conserved and carefully managed in the future. Federal lands are called out to acknowledge the District's limited jurisdiction over them, but are still discussed in the text of the District Elements. Downtown includes its own set of conservation, enhancement, and change areas, described in more detail in the Central Washington Area Element. Much of the institutional land on the map represents colleges and universities; change and infill can be expected on each campus consistent with campus plans. Other institutional sites likewise may see new buildings or facilities added. Policies in the Land Use Element and the Educational Facilities Element address the compatibility of such uses with surrounding neighborhoods. ^{223.22}

The District's Future Land Use Map ²²⁴

Maps showing the general distribution and character of future land uses in the city have been an essential part of the Comprehensive Plan for over half a century. Both the 1950 and 1967 Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital depicted "high density", "moderate density", and "low density" residential neighborhoods. These Plans further defined "Local Commercial" areas along many corridor streets, a "Downtown Commercial" area, and a "Central Federal Employment Area". The Maps also called out hospitals, universities, industrial areas, and federal installations. ^{224.1}

The District portion of the 1984 Comprehensive Plan—the first Plan of the Home Rule Era—was initially adopted without a Land Use Map. A set of four large maps was adopted in 1985, along with the Land Use Element itself. In the years that followed, the four maps were consolidated into two maps—a Generalized Land Use Map and a Generalized Land Use Policy Map. ^{224.2}

An illustrative "paintbrush" format, reminiscent of those used in the 1950 and 1967 Plans, was initially used for the 1985 Land Use Map. This format was rejected as being too imprecise and "blob-like." In subsequent years it was replaced by a map with clearly defined edges. The Comprehensive Plan text stipulated that streets and street names be displayed on the map to ensure its legibility. Its 15 land use categories were defined in broad terms—typical uses were described, but no density or intensity ranges were assigned. ^{224.3}

Future Land Use Map and Categories ²²⁵

Purpose of the Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map is part of the adopted Comprehensive Plan and carries the same legal weight as the Plan document itself. The Map uses color-coded categories to express public policy on future land uses across the city. Preparation of this map is explicitly required by DC Law; its purpose is to “represent the land use policies set forth in the proposed Land Use Element,” using “standardized colors for planning maps.” (1-246, D.C. Code). ^{225.1}

Definitions of Land Use Categories

Residential Categories

Four residential categories appear on the Future Land Use Map, as follows: ^{225.2}

Low Density Residential: This designation is used to define the District’s single family neighborhoods. Single family detached and semi detached housing units with front, back, and side yards are the predominant uses. The R-1-A, R-1-B, and R-2 Zone Districts are generally consistent with the Low Density Residential land use category, although other zones may apply. ^{225.3}

Moderate Density Residential: This designation is used to define the District’s row house neighborhoods, as well as its low-rise garden apartment complexes. The designation also applies to areas characterized by a mix of single family homes, 2-4 unit buildings, row houses, and low-rise apartment buildings. In some of the older inner city neighborhoods with this designation, there may also be existing multi-story apartments, many built decades ago when the areas were zoned for more dense uses (or were not zoned at all). The R-3, R-4, R-5-A Zone districts are generally consistent with the Moderate Density Residential category; the R-5-B district and other zones may also apply in some locations. ^{225.4}

Medium Density Residential: This designation is used to define neighborhoods or areas where mid-rise (4-7 stories) apartment buildings are the predominant use. Pockets of low and moderate density housing may exist within these areas. The Medium Density Residential designation also may apply to taller residential buildings surrounded by large areas of permanent open space. The R-5-B and R-5-C Zone districts are generally consistent with the Medium Density designation, although other zones may apply. ^{225.5}

High Density Residential: This designation is used to define neighborhoods and corridors where high-rise (8 stories or more) apartment buildings are the predominant use. Pockets of less dense housing may exist within these areas. The corresponding Zone districts are generally R-5-D and R-5-E, although other zones may apply. ^{225.6}



Low Density Residential



Moderate Density Residential



Medium Density Residential



High Density Residential



Low Density Commercial



Moderate Density Commercial



Medium Density Commercial



High Density Commercial

Commercial Categories

Four commercial categories appear on the Map, listed below. Although housing is permitted in all of these categories, the predominant use is commercial. A separate category (Mixed Use, defined on Page 2-32) is used to identify areas where the mixing of commercial and residential uses is strongly encouraged: 225.7

Low Density Commercial: This designation is used to define shopping and service areas that are generally low in scale and character. Retail, office, and service businesses are the predominant uses. Areas with this designation range from small business districts that draw primarily from the surrounding neighborhoods to larger business districts uses that draw from a broader market area. Their common feature is that they are comprised primarily of one- to three-story commercial buildings. The corresponding Zone districts are generally C-1 and C-2-A, although other districts may apply. 225.8

Moderate Density Commercial: This designation is used to define shopping and service areas that are somewhat more intense in scale and character than the low-density commercial areas. Retail, office, and service businesses are the predominant uses. Areas with this designation range from small business districts that draw primarily from the surrounding neighborhoods to larger business districts uses that draw from a broader market area. Buildings are larger and/or taller than those in low density commercial areas but generally do not exceed five stories in height. The corresponding Zone districts are generally C-2-A, C-2-B, and C-3-A, although other districts may apply. 225.9

Medium Density Commercial: This designation is used to define shopping and service areas that are somewhat more intense in scale and character than the moderate-density commercial areas. Retail, office, and service businesses are the predominant uses. Areas with this designation generally draw from a citywide market area. Buildings are generally larger and/or taller than those in moderate density commercial areas but generally do not exceed eight stories in height. The corresponding Zone districts are generally C-2-B, C-2-C, C-3-A, and C-3-B, although other districts may apply. 225.10

High Density Commercial: This designation is used to define the central employment district of the city and other major office employment centers on the downtown perimeter. It is characterized by office and mixed office/retail buildings greater than eight stories in height, although many lower scale buildings (including historic buildings) are interspersed. The corresponding Zone districts are generally C-2-C, C-3-C, C-4, and C-5, although other districts may apply. 225.11

Production, Distribution, and Repair (PDR): The Production, Distribution, and Repair (PDR) category is used to define areas characterized by manufacturing, warehousing, wholesale and distribution centers, transportation services, food services, printers and publishers, tourism support services, and commercial, municipal, and utility activities which may

require substantial buffering from noise-, air pollution- and light-sensitive uses such as housing. This category is also used to denote railroad rights-of-way, switching and maintenance yards, bus garages, and similar uses related to the movement of freight, such as truck terminals. A variety of Zone districts apply within PDR areas, recognizing the different intensities of use and impacts generated by various PDR activities. The corresponding Zone districts are generally CM-1, CM-2, CM-3, and M, although other districts may apply. The present density and height limits set by these districts are expected to remain for the foreseeable future. 225.12



Production, Distribution, and Repair

Public and Institutional Categories

Four public and institutional land use categories appear on the Map, as follows: 225.13

Federal: This designation includes land and facilities owned, occupied and used by the federal government, excluding parks and open space. Uses include military bases, federal government buildings, the International Chancery Center, federal hospitals, and similar federal government activities. The “Federal” category generally denotes ownership rather than use. Land with this designation is generally not subject to zoning. In the event federal interests on any given federal site terminate, zoning for these areas should be established in a manner that is consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies. 225.14



Federal

Local Public Facilities: This designation includes land and facilities occupied and used by the District of Columbia government or other local government agencies (such as WMATA), excluding parks and open space. Uses include public schools including charter schools, public hospitals, government office complexes, and similar local government activities. Because of the map scale, local public facilities smaller than one acre—including some of the District’s libraries, police and fire stations, and similar uses—may not appear on the Map. Zoning designations vary depending on surrounding uses. 225.15



Local Public Facilities

Institutional: This designation includes land and facilities occupied and used by colleges and universities, large private schools, hospitals, religious organizations, and similar institutions. Smaller institutional uses such as churches are generally not mapped, unless they are located on sites that are several acres in size. Zoning designations vary depending on surrounding uses. 225.16



Institutional

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space: This designation includes the federal and District park systems, including the National Parks, the circles and squares of the L’Enfant city and District neighborhoods, the National Mall, settings for significant commemorative works, certain federal buildings such as the White House and the US Capitol grounds, and museums, and District-operated parks and associated recreation centers. It also includes permanent open space uses such as cemeteries, open space associated with utilities such as the Dalecarlia and McMillan Reservoirs, and open space along highways



Parks, Recreation and Open Space

such as Suitland Parkway. This category includes a mix of passive open space (for resource conservation and habitat protection) and active open space (for recreation). Because of the map scale, parks smaller than one acre—including many of the triangles along the city’s avenues—may not appear on the Map. Zoning designations for these areas vary. The federal parklands are generally unzoned, and District parklands tend to be zoned the same as surrounding land uses. ^{225.17}

Mixed Use Categories

The Future Land Use Map indicates areas where the mixing of two or more land uses is encouraged. The particular combination of uses desired in a given area is depicted in striped patterns, with stripe colors corresponding to the categories defined on the previous pages. The Mixed Use category generally applies in the following three circumstances:

- a. Established, pedestrian-oriented commercial areas which also include substantial amounts of housing, typically on the upper stories of buildings with ground floor retail or office uses;
- b. Commercial corridors or districts which may not contain substantial amounts of housing today, but where more housing is desired in the future. The pattern envisioned for such areas is typically one of pedestrian-oriented streets, with ground floor retail or office uses and upper story housing; and
- c. Large sites (generally greater than 10 acres in size), where opportunities for multiple uses exist but a plan dictating the precise location of these uses has yet to be prepared. ^{225.18}

The general density and intensity of development within a given Mixed Use area is determined by the specific mix of uses shown. If the desired outcome is to emphasize one use over the other (for example, ground floor retail with three stories of housing above), the Future Land Use Map may note the dominant use by showing it at a slightly higher density than the other use in the mix (in this case, “Moderate Density Residential/Low Density Commercial”). The Comprehensive Plan Area Elements may also provide detail on the specific mix of uses envisioned. ^{225.19}

It should also be acknowledged that because of the scale of the Future Land Use Map and the fine-grained pattern of land use in older parts of the city, many of the areas shown purely as “Commercial” may also contain other uses, including housing. Likewise, some of the areas shown as purely “Residential” contain existing incidental commercial uses such as corner stores or gas stations, or established institutional uses such as churches. The “Mixed Use” designation is intended primarily for larger areas where no single use predominates today, or areas where multiple uses are specifically encouraged in the future. ^{225.20}

A variety of zoning designations are used in Mixed Use areas, depending on the combination of uses, densities, and intensities. The city has developed a number of designations specifically for mixed use areas (such as SP-1, SP-2, CR, and the Waterfront districts). Residential uses are permitted in all of the commercial zones, however, so many Mixed Use areas may have commercial zoning. ^{225,21}

Guidelines for Using the Generalized Policy Map and the Future Land Use Map ²²⁶

The Generalized Policy Map and Future Land Use Map are intended to provide generalized guides for development and conservation decisions. Several important parameters, defined below, apply to their use and interpretation.

- a. The Future Land Use Map is not a zoning map. Whereas zoning maps are parcel-specific, and establish detailed requirements for setbacks, height, use, parking, and other attributes, the Future Land Use Map does not follow parcel boundaries and its categories do not specify allowable uses or dimensional standards. By definition, the Map is to be interpreted broadly.
- b. The Future Land Use Map is a generalized depiction of intended uses in the horizon year of the Comprehensive Plan, roughly 20 years in the future. It is not an “existing land use map,” although in many cases future uses in an area may be the same as those that exist today.
- c. The densities within any given area on the Future Land Use Map reflect all contiguous properties on a block—there may be individual buildings that are higher or lower than these ranges within each area. Similarly, the land use category definitions describe the general character of development in each area, citing typical building heights (in stories) as appropriate. It should be noted that the granting of density bonuses (for example, through Planned Unit Developments) may result in heights that exceed the typical ranges cited here.
- d. The zoning of any given area should be guided by the Future Land Use Map, interpreted in conjunction with the text of the Comprehensive Plan, including the citywide elements and the area elements, as well as approved Small Area Plans.
- e. The designation of an area with a particular land use category does not necessarily mean that the most intense zoning district described in the land use definitions is automatically permitted. A range of densities and intensities applies within each category, and the use of different zone districts within each category should reinforce this range. There are more than twice as many zone districts (about 30, plus more than a dozen overlay zones) as there are Comprehensive Plan land use categories. For example, there are at least three zone districts corresponding to “Low

Density Residential” and three zone districts corresponding to “Moderate Density Residential.” Multiple zones should continue to be used to distinguish the different types of low- or moderate-density residential development which may occur within each area.

- f. Some zone districts may be compatible with more than one Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map designation. As an example, the existing C-2-A zone is consistent with both the Low Density Commercial and the Moderate Density Commercial designation, depending on the prevailing character of the area and the adjacent uses. A correspondence table indicating which zones are “clearly consistent”, “potentially consistent” and “inconsistent” with the Comprehensive Plan categories should be prepared to assist in Comprehensive Plan implementation and future zoning actions (see Action LU-4.3.B).
- g. The intent of the Future Land Use Map is to show use rather than ownership. However, in a number of cases, ownership is displayed to note the District’s limited jurisdiction. Specifically, non-park federal facilities are shown as “Federal” even though the actual uses include housing and industry (e.g., Bolling Air Force Base), offices (e.g., the Federal Triangle), hospitals (e.g., Walter Reed), and other activities. Similarly, the “Local Public” designation includes high-impact uses such as solid waste transfer stations and stadiums, as well as low-impact uses such as schools. Other maps in the Comprehensive Plan are used to show the specific types of public uses present in each area.
- h. The Map does not show density or intensity on institutional and local public sites. If a change in use occurs on these sites in the future (for example, a school becomes surplus or is redeveloped), the new designations should be comparable in density or intensity to those in the vicinity, unless otherwise stated in the Comprehensive Plan Area Elements or an approved Campus Plan.
- i. Streets and public rights-of-way are not an explicit land use category on the Future Land Use Map. Within any given area, the streets that pass through are assigned the same designation as the adjacent uses.

- j. Urban renewal plans remain in effect for parts of the District of Columbia, including Shaw, Downtown, and Fort Lincoln. These plans remain in effect and their controlling provisions must be considered as land use and zoning decisions are made.
- k. Finally, the Future Land Use Map and the Generalized Policy Map can be amended. They are not intended to freeze future development patterns for the next 20 years. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic document that is periodically updated in response to the changing needs of the city. Requests to amend the maps can be made by residents, property owners, developers, and the District itself. In all cases, such changes require formal public hearings before the DC Council, and ample opportunities for formal public input. The process for Comprehensive Plan amendments is described in the Implementation Element. ^{226.1}